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Written on April 6, 2016 at 11:46 am by [Navy Medicine](#)

## I Am Navy Medicine: Lt. Cmdr. Teri Ryals

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by Lt. Cmdr. Teri Ryals, Naval Medical Center San Diego sexual assault medical forensic program



SAN DIEGO (March 17, 2016)

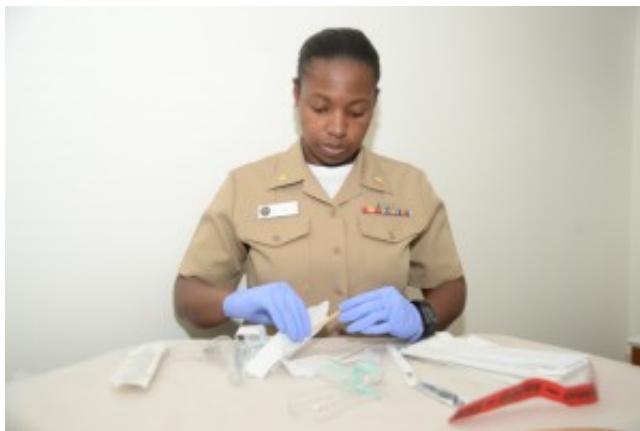
Lt. Cmdr. Teri R. Ryals is the head manager for the Sexual

Assault Medical Forensic Examiner (SAMFE) program at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCSD). Ryals assumed the SAMFE program manager position in January 2015, where she became one of 33 nurses selected as part of a training mobilization team to assist in identifying issues and remedying existing problems related to staff training and the management of patients of sexual assault. (U.S. Navy photo by NMCSD Public Affairs/Released)

My decision to join the Navy was heavily influenced by my father's career and his passion for being a Navy nurse. He loved the Navy and served our country for more than 31 years. Over the past four years of my career, I've been given endless opportunities by my leadership and I am grateful for that. I began my career as a labor and delivery nurse and have been in the maternal child area as a staff nurse in both subordinate and leadership roles for eight years.

It was not until about three years ago when I heard from one of my mentors, Michelle Ortiz, who delivered a speech about the negative impact of sexual assault on the Navy and the role a sexual assault forensic examiner (SAMFE) plays in addressing the medical forensic evidence collection for patients of sexual assault. I became intrigued and participated in the training, but never in a million years did I realize I would be a leader and pioneer in shaping the training across the world for how we manage and provide care for patients of sexual assault.

I reported to Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCSD) in November of 2013, and joined their SMAFE team in December. NMCSD had recently started their program, and I had the privilege of training under my current mentor, Lt. Cmdr. Jerri Gray, who is now the SAMFE program manager for Navy Medicine West — the U.S. Navy's health care system in the Western Pacific and senior headquarters to Navy Medicine's research and development enterprise. I assumed the SAMFE program manager position in January 2015, and became one of 33 nurses selected as part of a training mobilization team to assist in identifying issues and remedying existing problems related to staff training and the management of patients of sexual assault. I have worked diligently to implement these changes into NMCSD's sexual assault medical forensic program — a program, which has become a model for best practice across the west coast.



SAN DIEGO (March 17, 2016) Lt. Cmdr. Teri R. Ryals, head manager for the Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examiner (SAMFE) program at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCSD), displays several devices that are used by sexual assault forensic examiners when examining patients. (U.S. Navy photo by NMCSD Public Affairs/Released)

Our program has truly evolved over the last year as part of a massive campaign to address and improve services provided to sexual assault patients. We transformed our training through policy updates, which have had a major impact on the makeup of our team, resulting in the expansion of our services and training capabilities throughout Navy Medicine. Our team began with just a handful of nurses and now consists of several nurses, providers, and corpsmen. Not only did we train our team, we assisted in the creation of Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton's program. We have been identified as a resource to various programs across the world, and assisted with training members throughout the fleet. NMCSD's SAMFE team is a paragon of excellence in healthcare, which embodies readiness, value, and jointness.

If I could sum up my experience in one sentence, it would read: "As a forensic nurse examiner, I am an educator, mentor, and leader striving for standardization of training and improved care for patients of sexual assault."

My name is Teri Ryals and I Am Navy Medicine!

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